

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI); Educational Research and Development Centers Program

AGENCY: Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice of proposed priorities.

SUMMARY: The Secretary proposes priorities for seven national educational research and development centers that would carry out sustained research and development to address nationally significant problems and issues in education.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before May 25, 1995.

ADDRESSES: All comments concerning these proposed priorities should be addressed to Jacqueline Jenkins, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW., room 510G, Washington, DC 20208-5573. Comments can be faxed to Jacqueline Jenkins at (202) 219-2030. Comments can be sent electronically to Jackie — Jenkins@ed.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jacqueline Jenkins, telephone: (202) 219-2079. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Title IX of Public Law 103-227, which authorizes the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, establishes five new national research institutes to carry out coordinated and comprehensive programs of research, development, evaluation, and dissemination designed to provide research-based leadership for the improvement of education. The five institutes are—

- (1) The National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment;
- (2) The National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students;
- (3) The National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policy-Making, and Management;
- (4) The National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education; and
- (5) The National Institute on Postsecondary Education, Libraries, and Lifelong Learning.

The institutes support sustained research and development focused on significant national problems and issues in education conducted by national research and development centers. Institutions eligible to receive center

awards include institutions of higher education, institutions of higher education in consort with public agencies or non-profit organizations, and interstate agencies established by compact that operate subsidiary bodies to conduct postsecondary education research and development.

The Secretary invites comments on the seven priority topics included in this announcement. Comments may address individual center priorities or the priorities as a whole. In addition to centers addressing the proposed priorities, OERI will continue to support a Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At-Risk, a National Reading Research Center, and a National Research Center on Gifted and Talented Children and Youth.

Through a series of meetings, regional hearings, and **Federal Register** Notices, OERI solicited advice from parents, teachers, administrators, policy-makers, business people, researchers, and others to identify the most needed research and development activities. After reviewing this advice, OERI identified the priorities proposed in this Notice. The final research and development center priorities will be published following review of the public comment and consideration of the priorities by OERI's National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board.

Proposed Absolute Priorities

Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), the Secretary proposes to give an absolute preference to applications that meet the general priority and one of the individual priorities listed below. Funding of any individual priority will depend on the availability of funds, the nature of the final priority, and the quality of applications received.

Proposed General Absolute Priority: Each national research and development center must—

- (a) Conduct a coherent, sustained program of research and development to address problems and issues of national significance in its individual priority area, using a well-conceptualized and theoretically sound framework;
- (b) Contribute to the development and advancement of theory in the area of its individual priority;
- (c) Conduct scientifically rigorous studies capable of generating findings that contribute substantially to understanding in the field;
- (d) Conduct work of sufficient size, scope, and duration to produce definitive guidance for improvement efforts and future research;
- (e) Address issues of both equity and excellence in education in its individual priority area; and

(f) Document, report, and disseminate information about its research findings and other accomplishments in ways that will allow others to use that information.

Proposed Absolute Priority 1: Promoting the Cognitive and Social-Emotional Development of Young Children

Under this priority, a national research and development center must—

- (a) Conduct research and development on promoting the cognitive and social-emotional development and achievement of young children, beginning at birth, especially children who are placed at risk of educational failure because of community, economic, linguistic, family, or disability factors, and the general well-being of their families; and
- (b) Include in its work research or development related to the following topics:

- (1) The skills, knowledge, and expectations that enable families, educators, and others in the community to help young children come to school prepared to learn.
- (2) Effective models and strategies that families, educators, and others can use to foster young children's learning.
- (3) How various early childhood supports and services within the community can be designed and implemented to maximize young children's cognitive and social-emotional development, success in preschool, and achievement in elementary grades.

Proposed Absolute Priority 2: Improving Student Learning and Achievement

Under this priority, a national research and development center must—

- (a) Conduct research and development on improving student learning and achievement; and
- (b) Include in its work research or development related to the following topics:
 - (1) How students acquire knowledge and develop cognitive skills.
 - (2) The social context of learning, including the social organization of classrooms and schools.
 - (3) The integration of curriculum changes with other efforts to improve student learning and achievement.
 - (4) Effective teaching in the core academic content areas.
 - (5) The role of student motivation and student responsibility in creating safe schools and environments conducive to learning.
 - (6) Effective professional development for educators.

Proposed Absolute Priority 3: Improving Student Assessment

Under this priority, a national research and development center must—

(a) Conduct research and development on improving student assessment; and

(b) Include in its work research or development related to the following topics:

(1) The development of assessments that are aligned with curriculum and instruction and can be used to improve teaching and learning.

(2) The use of assessments to improve instruction in the core content areas, particularly English language arts and mathematics, and to promote educational accountability.

(3) The technical quality (validity, reliability, fairness, and content coverage) of different types of assessments.

Proposed Absolute Priority 4: Meeting the Educational Needs of a Diverse Student Population

Under this priority, a national research and development center must—

(a) Conduct research and development on meeting the educational needs of an increasingly diverse student population, including students who are at risk of educational failure because of limited English proficiency, poverty, race, ethnicity, culture, or geographical location; and

(b) Include in its work research or development related to the following topics:

(1) Recognizing and building on the strengths of students from diverse backgrounds to help all students achieve to high academic standards.

(2) Professional development that enhances the abilities of teachers and other school personnel to help language minority students and other students at risk of educational failure achieve to high academic standards.

(3) Structuring out-of-school experiences to help students at risk of educational failure overcome obstacles and achieve school success.

(4) Working with families and community-based organizations to help students at risk of educational failure achieve to high academic standards.

(5) Ways that federal, state, and community reform efforts can be designed so that language minority students and other students at risk of educational failure learn to high standards.

Proposed Absolute Priority 5: Increasing the Effectiveness of State and Local Education Reform Efforts

Under this priority, a national research and development center must—

(a) Conduct research and development on improving the effectiveness of state and local efforts to reform elementary and secondary education; and

(b) Include in its work research or development related to the following topics:

(1) The role of challenging academic standards in efforts to reform elementary and secondary education.

(2) The role of education policy and financing in improving learning opportunities for all students.

(3) The coherence of state, district and school-level reforms and their effects on the learning of all students.

(4) The role of incentives in the reform of elementary and secondary education.

(5) School-level strategies for improving education within the context of state and district reforms.

(6) Reforms to improve children's learning by strengthening the connections between schools and communities.

(7) Factors that influence the success of state, district, and school-level reforms, from initiation through implementation to "scaling up."

Proposed Absolute Priority 6: Improving Postsecondary Education and the Preparation of Adults for Work

Under this priority, a national research and development center must—

(a) Conduct research and development on improving postsecondary education and the preparation of adults for work and lifelong learning; and

(b) Include in its work research or development related the following topics:

(1) Effective transitions from school to work for secondary and postsecondary students.

(2) The relationships among students' access to and participation and progress in postsecondary education, their academic achievement, and their later work force participation.

(3) The improvement of postsecondary student learning and assessment.

(4) Containing costs and improving the productivity and accountability of postsecondary institutions.

(5) Articulation between secondary and postsecondary education.

Proposed Absolute Priority 7: Improving Adult Learning and Literacy

Under this priority, a national research and development center must—

(a) Conduct research and development on improving adult learning and literacy, including the acquisition of skills needed for workforce participation and responsible citizenship; and

(b) Include in its work research or development related to the following topics:

(1) Adult acquisition of knowledge and development of cognitive skills.

(2) Effective methods and instructional strategies to improve adult learning, including effective use of educational technology.

(3) Effective methods for professional development of instructional staff in adult literacy.

(4) The assessment of adult learning.

Proposed Post-Award Requirements

The Secretary proposes the following post-award requirements consistent with the Educational Research, Development, Dissemination, and Improvement Act of 1994. A grantee receiving a center award must—

(a) Provide OERI with information about center projects and products and other appropriate research information so that OERI can monitor center progress and maintain its inventory of funded research projects. This information must be provided through media that include an electronic network;

(b) Conduct and evaluate research projects in conformity with the highest professional standards of research practice;

(c) Reserve five percent of each budget period's funds to support activities that fall within the center's priority area, are designed and mutually agreed to by the center and OERI, and enhance OERI's ability to carry out its mission. Such activities may include developing research agendas, conducting research projects collaborating with other federally-supported entities, and engaging in research agenda setting and dissemination activities; and

(d) At the end of the award period, synthesize the findings and advances in knowledge that resulted from the Center's program of work and describe the potential impact on the improvement of American education, including any observable impact to date.

Note: This notice of proposed priorities does not solicit applications. A notice inviting applications under this competition will be published in the **Federal Register**

concurrent with or following publication of the notice of final priorities.

Invitation to Comment

Interested persons are invited to submit comments and recommendations regarding these proposed priorities.

All comments submitted in response to this notice will be available for public

inspection, during and after the comment period, in Room 510G, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

Program Authority: P.L. 103-227, Title IX. (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Numbers 84.305, 84.306, 84.307, 84.308, and

84.309 Educational Research and Development Centers Program)

Dated: April 4, 1995.

Sharon Porter Robinson,

Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement.

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